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THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

THE

DIVINELY APPOINTED MEANS

TO SECURE THE

PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH,

AND THE

CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

BY JAMES H. THOMAS.

“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—GAL. iii. 29.

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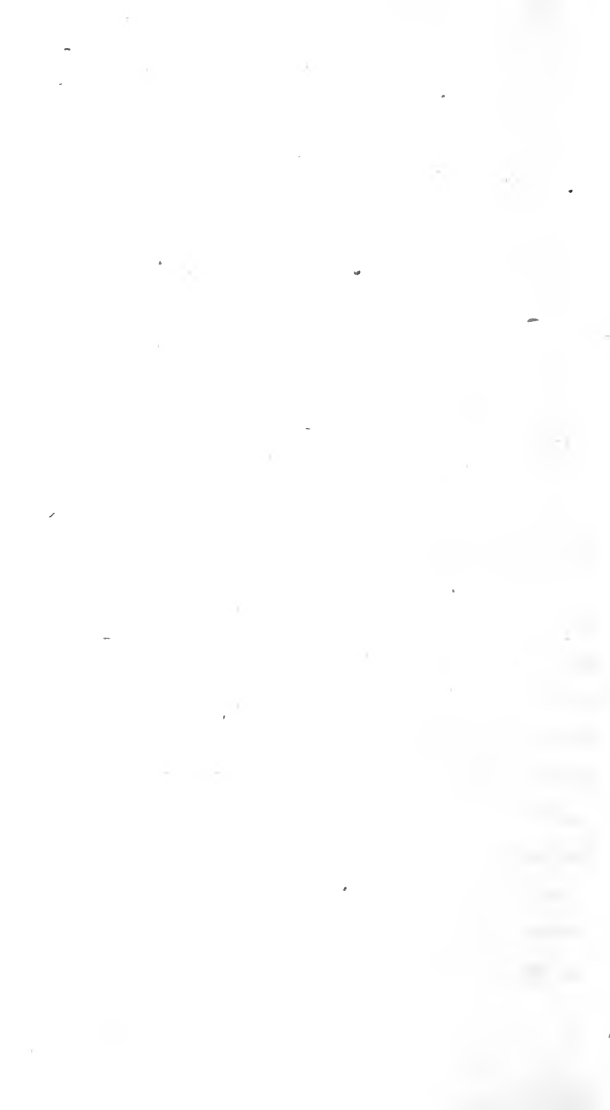
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P R E F A C E .

My object in giving these sermons to the public is not because there is anything new or strange in them to the intelligent Christian, but to stir up the pure minds of the people of God to more diligence and fidelity in the religious education of their children according to the covenant vows of God upon them. In the course of more than thirty-five years in the ministry, I have seen many seasons of prosperity and declension in the church of God ; and I have frequently inquired, with deep interest, why does the church experience so many ups and downs, when it is in fact based upon divine promises, as firm and immutable as eternal truth ?

Why do her friends and patrons shrink and tremble lest they should be lost and perish under her ruins? Can there be any suspicion that our covenant-keeping God will ever forget his promise, and leave that beloved Zion to perish which He loveth more than all the dwellings of Jacob? Can He fail to accomplish all that He has pledged to his church and people? Has God promised, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,' and will He not make it good? Can one instance be found in the whole history of the church where God has been unfaithful to this promise? If we have had wicked and disobedient children, the fault is ours, and not God's. Though we may be pious, yet we have not, like Abraham, commanded our children and household after us. We have been unfaithful to our covenanted vows, and have reaped its bitter fruits.

There has been too much of human invention introduced into the administration of

ecclesiastical affairs, and too little dependence upon the divine promise and the divinely appointed means of grace. We appear to have forgotten, so far as practice is concerned, that one grand design of the gospel was to 'turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' If the church were truly faithful to their children, and dealt faithfully with their baptized children through their parents, and thus recognize their relationship to the church, we should see less of error, heresy, schism and delusion in the church, and a far higher tone of vital piety.

In all the churches with which I have been associated, the declension of vital piety may be traced to a neglect of parental fidelity in the religious education of their children. Children are not treated as if they were the most remotely related to the church. And the church does not appear to

feel her obligation to pray with and watch over the conduct of those children who have the seal of the covenant upon them. When the church performs all the duties of a mother to her children, and when parents faithfully fulfil her covenant vows, then shall we see a people prepared for the Lord.

If the following discussion should be so overruled by the great Head of the church as to constrain the covenant people of God to the faithful performance of their duty to their children, then my object will be attained, my prayers answered, the church of Jesus Christ benefitted, and the covenant-keeping God of Abraham glorified.

J. H. T.

THE
ABRAHAMIC COVENANT,
AND
CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.”—GENESIS, xvii. 7.

THE history of the venerable patriarch, Abraham, is very interesting when considered as the father of the faithful. In his family the church of God was first visibly organized. This is one of the most important eras in the history of the church. Abraham was educated in the idolatry of those times, and continued in his impenitent course till commanded by his God to leave his native country, his kindred, and his father's family, and go to a land that would be shown to him. And to encourage him to practise such great self-denial, God says: ‘I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name

great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' With such encouragement, he leaves his friends to go and sojourn among strangers. When he arrived in the land of Canaan, God promised to give all the land to his posterity. On account of a famine, Abraham was compelled to go down to Egypt. From this place he soon returned, and Lot with him, to the altar he had erected at Bethel. Soon after this, Abraham and Lot separate, and it was so arranged that Abraham tarried in the borders of Canaan. Abraham, in the course of his journeying, met with Melchisedec, King of Salem, and priest of the most high God, who blessed him, and to him Abraham gave tithes. He received frequent assurances of God's design to bless him and his posterity, till we come to that period in which the words of the text were uttered, when and where God established his covenant with him; and, as a confirmation of that covenant, his name is changed from Abram to Abraham; the first signifying a high father, and the latter a father of a multitude.

I. INVESTIGATE THE NATURE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

II. ALL HIS POSTERITY ARE INTERESTED IN THIS COVENANT.

I. Investigate the nature of the Abrahamic covenant.

1st. From a careful examination of the history of the Jews, it appears there were very many wicked people in covenant. In the visible church, many had nothing but the external form of godliness; they were entirely ignorant of the power of religion in the heart; and in a short time even the form of godliness was laid aside, and all respect for God and his law was banished from the heart and practice; yea, their most costly sacrifices had become an abomination to the Lord. Wickedness and hypocrisy had increased to such a degree, that the Saviour found a very small remnant who were truly pious. The tradition of the ancients, the superstition and bigotry of that corrupted age, and the depravity and deceitfulness of the carnal heart, had obliterated almost every vestige of genuine piety. They had become worse than the heathen around them. Notwithstanding all this wickedness and presumptuous impiety, they were visibly in covenant with God. They called Abraham their father, and God their God. They were esteemed the people of God by all the surrounding nations. They were the natural seed of Abraham, to whom the promise was originally given. They received the sign of circumcision, and partook of the passover; and were visibly in covenant

as much as Abraham. To the view of the gentiles, there was no difference in their covenant relation, for they were all equally members of the Jewish church. Hence we have sufficient reason to conclude that many thus in covenant were vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction. What became of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with their companies? Were they not sent to a speedy destruction? Where shall we find large multitudes of the rebellious house of Israel? If they misimproved their superior privileges, were they not exposed to be turned into hell with all that forget God, notwithstanding they were within the pale of the visible church? A mere profession of religion will not justify us before that God who looketh at the heart. Because Nadab and Abihu were in covenant, are they therefore saved from the wrath of a holy and justly offended God? Not at all. Can, then, the Abrahamic covenant be *the covenant of grace* to everlasting life? It cannot; for "they are not all Israel which are of Israel." If this covenant had been the covenant of grace to eternal life, then all in covenant would certainly be saved; but the inspired apostle expressly asserts that they are not all saved.

2d. The Abrahamic covenant is not the covenant of works. The seal of this covenant is represented as a seal of the righteousness of faith. Has

faith anything to do, or can it be any way connected, with the covenant of works? Faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. If the Jews were under a covenant of works, would they have had anything to do with that righteousness which is of faith in a Saviour? Would they not have been strangers to such a righteousness, and ignorant of such a way of justification? Would they not have been entirely ignorant of the doctrine of justification by faith? But the pious patriarch was not ignorant of this doctrine, neither was the man after God's own heart. They were both sensible of their entire depravity, of the necessity of an atonement, and trusted in a Mediator. They exercised faith in a Saviour to redeem them from all iniquity, and present them without spot or wrinkle before the bar of God. In all their ablutions and in all their sacrifices they looked forward to the great Antetype that was prefigured in all these rites and ceremonies. But the very words of the covenant, 'I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee,' imply an exercise of mercy which cannot be known in a covenant of works. God declares that he will be gracious and merciful unto him and his posterity. The only condition known in a covenant of works is, *do and live*. If we offend in one point, we become transgressors, and are exposed to the

penalty. There is no provision made for repentance and reformation. It recognizes no way of escape for the transgressor. It demands the uttermost farthing. But do not the very words of the Abrahamic covenant imply very clearly an offer of mercy, and the possibility of salvation? What could God have said more than that he would be a God to Abraham and his seed? He has promised no more to those who live under the gospel dispensation. If men will sincerely repent of their sins, and in faith receive the Saviour promised to Abraham, they will experience all the blessings of the covenant made with Abraham. Here there is some prospect of deliverance from the penalty of the law; here appears to be a door of mercy opened to the seed of Abraham; and here are presented some faint glimmerings of hope and mercy to despairing sinners. If this was the covenant of works, we should hear no sounds of mercy, and not one ray of hope would manifest itself to the transgressor. But the words of this covenant were calculated to kindle a hope in the hearts of poor sinners, even before the appearance of the Messiah. It must therefore be something different from the covenant of works, for, 'by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified' in the sight of God; and yet Abraham was justified through the medium of the covenant God made

with him, for 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.'

3d. The Abrahamic covenant was not a covenant of land. It is very true that land was an appendage to it; but it was merely a temporal benefit accompanying a spiritual blessing. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' To the peculiar blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, God superadds the land of Canaan. This was added, more to assist in the performance of the duties enjoined upon them in the covenant, than on any other account. God loves to confer temporal benefits and privileges upon his penitent and obedient people. Can we rationally suppose that God would be at such pains to establish an everlasting covenant with Abraham, when nothing but a little piece of land was the grand object in view? God certainly had a far greater object in view than the mere disposal of the land of Canaan. Such a supposition is derogatory to the divine character.

4th. Although the Abrahamic covenant was not the covenant of grace, yet it was a gracious covenant.

It was a covenant made with a visible community. It was first visibly established in the family of Abraham, and by special promise se-

cured to his seed in their generations. By external relation, God was specially a God to the Jews, or Israelites, till the advent of the Messiah, when, according to the spirit of the divine word, that peculiar state of things, or that special dispensation, was to terminate; and yet, for some gracious purposes, which still remain to be accomplished, the Jews are still continued separate and distinct from all other nations of the earth, in remembrance of this covenant; for God remembers all his promises made to his ancient people.

Circumcision was a token of the covenant, and a seal of the promise of God to bestow blessings upon all those in covenant. While the Jews were in covenant, future blessings or judgments were promised or predicted. Upon a careful investigation of the history of the Jews, it will be found that God was true and faithful to every promise and prediction. His conduct towards them, notwithstanding their rebellion and presumptuous wickedness, was marked with peculiar kindness and long-suffering mercy. God would not suffer his great name to be polluted and profaned with impunity; he therefore visited them in judgment, but did not violate his holy covenant. That this is a covenant made with a visible community, is evident from the frequent references to it. Isaac and Jacob are reminded of it. The Lord appeared

unto Isaac, and said: 'I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake.' The Lord also said to Jacob: 'I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; and the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.' And to Moses the Lord said: 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' These words were addressed to Moses when he was called upon to go to Pharaoh, and plead for the liberation of the children of Israel. The Lord said expressly to Moses, when giving him his commission, 'I have seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt.' Does not God call them his people in consequence of the Abrahamic covenant? Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, praised God when he saw 'the performance of the mercy promised to the fathers, and that God remembered his holy covenant, and the oath which he swore to our father Abraham.' Hence we conclude that it was a gracious covenant, made with a visible community through Abraham, as their representative.

Again: This was a perpetual, or everlasting covenant. The term everlasting qualifies this covenant. It no doubt conveys the idea of endless duration. The literal meaning is always to

be preferred, unless it involves us in direct absurdities and insurmountable difficulties. But the very spirit and object of the covenant induce the adoption of the idea of endless continuance. If we attach a limited duration to this covenant, Abraham would have had cause to fear, if not for himself, yet certainly for his posterity. But he was commanded not to fear: 'Fear not, for I am your shield, and exceeding great reward;' because this covenant secures a resurrection from the dead, and will be recognized in heaven. This idea is confirmed by the Saviour's exposition, when answering the cavils of the Sadducees: "But, as touching the resurrection from the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but the living.'" Abraham had reason to believe that a continuing city was prepared for his reception, even an eternal inheritance. To limit the duration of this covenant, is to suppose that God will cease to be the God of Abraham and his seed, and that the connection between Christ and his people will or may be dissolved; and that all the provisions, encouragements, and promises of grace, secured to the seed of Abraham in this covenant, will perish. What can be more derogatory to the character of the

God of Abraham, and inconsistent with the whole tenor and spirit of the Bible?

Again: This covenant makes provision for the adoption of others, who are not the natural seed of Abraham: 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' Here the blessing is extended beyond the boundaries of Abraham's natural posterity. Through the Messiah, the promised seed, it extends to all the ends of the earth: 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' By faith in the Saviour, gentiles become joint heirs to this eternal inheritance: 'If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Through faith and patience we may inherit the promises. The door of mercy and salvation is open, in the covenant made with Abraham, to the world of mankind. Any stranger that was not of his seed, and sojourning with him, and complying with the conditions of the covenant, might be circumcised, and be made partaker of all the blessings secured to those in covenant. We are divinely informed that Abraham took Ishmael, his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin the self-same day, as God had said unto him. Hence learn the extent of the benevolence,

and the divine liberality of the provisions of this covenant. It is too rich to be a 'land contract.' It promises more than any, except a God, could perform.

Again: It is a covenant, in which all the blessings of the covenant of grace were promised and secured, by the counsel and oath of God, to the humble and sincere penitent who depends upon Christ for justification. Abraham had the promise of every needed blessing, both in this life and in that which is to come. Everything that was necessary to his salvation was insured to him by the promise of God: 'God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.' For his consolation, and to strengthen his faith, he had the oath of that God who cannot lie. The means of grace were insured to him and to his seed, the heirs of promise. By their covenant relation, they were constituted the visible objects of all the blessings of the divine promise, for 'to them were committed the oracles of God.' The law and circumcision, of themselves, can save no one from deserved condemnation; yet they are the appointed means of grace. They had the stated ministry of the priest: 'The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the

Lord of hosts.' They received repeated messages from God by the prophets, entreating them to 'return unto the Lord, who would have mercy upon them, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon.' They enjoyed the ordinances of the Temple service and the worship of God, and 'were instructed out of the law.' They possessed the 'holy Scriptures, which were able to make them wise unto salvation,' through faith in a promised Saviour. To the Israelites 'pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.' Their being in the covenant made them the visible objects of all the blessings of divine and sovereign grace. One of the grand, peculiar, and distinguished promises annexed to this covenant was the promise of a Saviour to come, who should redeem his people from their iniquities. This was the alpha and omega of the whole covenant transaction. Through the medium of this covenant the Saviour was to be introduced into this world, for he was to proceed from that part of the posterity of Abraham which retained their standing in the visible church.

Here two questions naturally suggest themselves :

1st. If the Abrahamic covenant be not the

covenant of grace to eternal life, then where shall we find the covenant of grace?

To this I answer, the covenant of grace is that agreement which took place in the counsel of eternity between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, concerning the redemption of the church. All God's gracious dealings towards his creatures are modifications of the same covenant, and intended to accomplish the grand object contained in that covenant. And as that covenant was the covenant of grace, so the Abrahamic covenant was a gracious covenant, and was peculiarly calculated to accomplish the gracious purposes of God in redeeming his church. The covenant of grace, or redemption, was made in eternity between the three persons of the adorable Trinity. The Abrahamic covenant was one of the grand means that God appointed and ordained to accomplish the designs of the covenant of grace.

We are in the next place led to inquire, what is meant by the seal of this covenant?

It is a token or mark of the covenant. 'And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.' The rainbow was a sign or token that God had established his covenant with Noah and his posterity, and a standing memorial that God would no more overflow the earth by a flood.

‘This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.’ It was the token of a covenant already in existence. It was not the introduction to a covenant, but the testimony of its existence. So it is with circumcision: It is the testimony, seal, or token of a covenant already made.

The seal of the covenant is, a surety that every thing contained in that covenant will be accomplished or performed. All parties interested in that covenant do agree that they will perform everything enjoined upon them as far as they are able. The seal is a testimony of this agreement. Circumcision is a seal of the mutual transaction between God and Abraham, and a surety that the promises of God to Abraham will certainly be fulfilled. By this rite, this mutual engagement is sealed, and God pledges favors and blessings to the obedient, and Abraham for himself and his seed engages obedience, and hence God does not hesitate to promise, for he says, ‘I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath

spoken of him.' The contract is first made and then sealed.

The ordinances of the church were for the most part attended with the shedding of blood before the gospel dispensation was introduced. Circumcision was intended to intimate or signify the entire corruption of the human heart, which must be put away. It was a painful and bloody rite. The mortification of sin is painful, and the sanctification of our nature is granted to sinners only through the blood of Christ. This bloody seal prefigures the blood of the atonement, and the thing signified by water in our baptism alludes to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. The legitimate inference is, that circumcision and baptism do virtually seal and ratify the same thing. Hence we conclude that it is a seal on the part of both God and man. God promises certain things to man, if he is obedient, and affixes a seal or token to these promises. Man embraces the offer and engages obedience, and receives this seal or token, and by it binds himself the more strongly, and by this public act receives God as his God, and the God of his seed or posterity.

From what has been said on the subject of seals we are clearly taught that circumcision is not properly the rite of initiation or admission into the church; but it is the visible seal of our church-

membership. Can the seal or token of a covenant be the door of admission into that covenant? It may be the visible testimony of the existence of a covenant; or it may seal or ratify a visible covenanted relation, but it cannot be said to introduce or initiate us into that covenant. It proves our membership, but it is faith that constitutes us members, or brings us into immediate union with Christ, the great head of the church. Was it circumcision or faith that brought Abraham into a covenant relationship to God? It was very manifestly faith, and circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and he had this faith while he was uncircumcised.

II. I shall now attempt to prove that the posterity of Abraham, or the children of believers, are interested in this covenant.

They are born in covenant, or become members, and are interested in it by birth. 'The uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people, he hath broken my covenant.' The spirit of this passage recognizes children as in covenant, although they may be uncircumcised, for how else could they be cut off? How could they break a covenant in which they were in no sense connected. At eight days old, they could not cause themselves to be circumcised, for they are

incapable of the necessary physical activity. They could not give any evidence of saving faith, and yet we have the word of God itself, that they are in covenant, and that they shall be cut off because they had broken covenant in that they were uncircumcised. It is not, however, to be supposed that the child will be cut off, or actually called to an account before the church, while in its infancy, or its minority before it shall have arrived to the years of discretion, except through its parents. But could the child be said to be cut off in any sense, if no covenant relation had ever existed? In order to maintain a consistency, we must admit that the child was born in covenant. If circumcision be neglected in infancy through the neglect of the parent, and if the child, when it arrives to years of understanding, does not acknowledge that covenant, and receive the seal, then that child 'is to be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.' And this violation of the covenant is a joint act of the parent and the child. Under the Jewish dispensation, the children of the Jews were born in covenant, and it was the indispensable duty of parents to place the seal of the covenant upon them. For neglecting this duty, the pious Moses was severely rebuked. The same idea of membership by birth is distinctly brought to view under the Christian dispensation.

‘The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.’ If one of the parents be a believer, then the children are federally holy. They are within the bonds of the covenant. ‘If the root be holy, so are the branches.’ In the New Testament we are taught that if the parents are in covenant, their children will be holy. Can we then, in any possible or consistent way, shut the children of believers out of the covenant? They are declared to be holy, if but one of their parents is a believer. By the term holy as it is used in this place, cannot be meant perfect freedom from sin; for all are ‘shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin.’ The children of believers and unbelievers must all, without exception, put off the old man with his deeds. By being holy as it is here used, must be meant that they are federally holy, or in covenant. We cannot consistently affix any other meaning to the term; and must pronounce the children of those in covenant, in some limited sense, members of the church.

Again, they are members according to the promise of God. ‘I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.’ The covenant is definitely established with Abraham, and ‘his seed after

him, in their generations for an everlasting covenant.' When God at different times, and to subsequent generations, renewed this covenant, and promised special favors to his people, it uniformly included your children, your seed, and your little ones. The covenant was established, or made with the seed of Abraham, as well as with Abraham. Who has any right to exclude one party of the covenant, simply because they cannot speak for themselves? Or who has any right to alter the conditions of the covenant, and thus exclude the children?

The Lord, when addressing Isaac, says: 'I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.' When Isaac blessed Jacob, his seed was included. The blessing of Abraham was given to Jacob and his seed with him. God further encourages Jacob: 'In thee, and in thy seed, shall the families of the earth be blessed. The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt: and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children forever.' God, by his special promise, does recognize children as interested in the covenant under

the Mosaic or Jewish dispensation. Who dare disinherit them of these their privileges? Who is so presumptuous and cruel as to take from children that which God hath given to them, and thus deprive them of all the birthright privileges resulting from their covenant relationship to their believing parents? Christ and his holy apostles have not cut them off. Christ says: 'Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' The apostles have, in substance and in spirit, repeated the promises made to the Jews, as if they were perfectly applicable to Christians under the gospel dispensation, and that, too, in the immediate view of the prejudices of a Jewish education. 'The promise is unto you and your children,' was their declaration on the day of Pentecost, when Jews were congregated from almost every part of the Roman Empire. 'In thy seed shall the kindreds of the earth be blessed. If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Under the gospel dispensation, those 'who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' did depend upon, and referred us all to the promises made to Abraham. How then can we be so cruel as to deprive them of the watch and care of the church? God has not cut them off by any precept or example recorded in his word,

and why should we? God in receiving us, receives them, and why should we object to their reception? I do not know that they are more likely to bring a reproach upon the cause of religion than we, their parents. They are, with us, parties in the covenant, and what right have we to erase their names? God notices them notwithstanding their infancy and minority, and why should not we?

Infer. I. From our subject we are taught that believers or those in covenant are bound to place the seal of the covenant upon their children. For the neglect of this duty there is no rational or consistent excuse. A neglect of it does not lessen or destroy obligation, or save us from breaking covenant. God threatened to destroy Moses for neglecting to circumcise his son, because his wife was opposed to it. He was compelled to stop in the midst of his journey and attend to it. Believers are solemnly bound by covenant to place the seal upon their offspring; and when they neglect it, they only perform one half of their vows, and thus exclude their children from a participation of the blessings of the covenant. To urge parents to the performance of this duty, God has declared his intention of cutting off the uncircumcised from his people, as having broken covenant. [Gen. xvii. 14.] A neglect of this duty is no

doubt, one reason why there are so few young members in the church of Jesus Christ.

It may here be asked, whether baptized persons may not place the seal upon their children, even though they may not be in full communion with the church ; for I am born a member of the church, and have received the seal of the covenant. In reply, I ask, have you liberated your parents from their solemn covenant engagements for you ? They are bound for you still ; for you feel yourselves incapable of taking these baptismal vows upon yourselves. Are you, then, fit to engage for your children ? It is true you are members of the church, and are in covenant by birth, but have you ever recognized that membership by your own act ? Have you ever come forward and performed the duties of members ? Or have you like Esau, despised this your birthright privilege ? Your parents dedicated you to God under the most solemn covenant vows ; but have you ever dedicated yourselves to God ? Have you, by your conduct, approved and sanctioned what your parents did for you ? If through a want of faith and confidence in the divine promise, you feel unwilling or incapacitated to take your baptismal vows upon yourselves, and thus sweetly and joyfully relieve your parents, are you not equally incapable and unfit to enter into solemn covenant for

your children? Does it not require the same exercise of faith in the one case as in the other? In fact, you have broken covenant. The neglect of the church to watch over you, may have been one of the means that has led you to break covenant; but this will not excuse you for the omission of duty when we appear before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. It was your duty to profess your faith in Christ, and enter publicly into covenant with God long ere this day. It was the duty of the church to watch over you, and entreat and exhort you to immediate repentance; and it was the duty of the church to give you no peace, or rest, as long as you lived in the violation of your covenant; but since the church has neglected her duty, yet the word of God and his providences, which you have daily seen, have been abundantly sufficient to direct you to Christ as your only Redeemer and Saviour. If you hope that you have indeed met with a change, and have in penitence and faith received Christ as your only ground of justification before God, how dare you continue in the violation of covenant engagements a single day? You have one of the seals of visible membership placed upon you, and are you afraid, that in receiving the other sealing ordinance, you will through the deceitfulness of your wicked heart again break covenant? So, then, you are really

afraid to trust yourselves in the hands of a covenant-keeping God? How, then, can or dare you give your children to God? Will you put your children where you dare not trust yourselves? But look at this matter in another point of view. You are now living in violation of the covenant; you are solemnly and divinely called upon to make to yourselves a new heart, and immediately to repent; and you are called upon to do it, that the covenant may be established with your children, and that the rich blessings of salvation may be entailed upon your children's children. If you have broken covenant, is there any propriety in placing the seal upon your children? Thus, in breaking covenant yourselves, and in neglecting to liberate your parents from their covenant engagements in your behalf, and omitting to profess your faith in Christ, you are instrumental in depriving your children of the richest covenanted blessings: you break covenant; you keep them out of the shade of the covenant, and you arrest the regular descent of the blessing from generation to generation. The church are ready and willing to receive you according to the terms of the gospel, and the conditions of the covenant; they are anxiously and prayerfully waiting for it. I confess that the church, except in a very few instances, have been greatly to blame in not recognizing your covenant relation-

ship; but I do hope and trust the time will soon arrive, when she will be more faithful to her infant members, and take better care of her young and tender lambs; and that she will in due time receive all those in the covenant, by birthright or otherwise, into a full communion, or cut them off by a gospel or special act, after a fair and impartial trial. Then shall we be delivered from many difficulties: for we shall see our children and youth uniting with their fathers and mothers in Israel in commemorating the love of our dear Redeemer. A greater proportion of our members would be collected from among our children and youth. All our churches would thrive and flourish more rapidly; and vice and infidelity would be compelled to hide their heads in confusion. If the churches and if parents would be faithful to the souls committed to their care, we should have reason to calculate upon a continued blessing, and a perpetual revival. Our children and youth would not only approve and sanction what their parents did for them, by professing their faith in Christ, but also feel grateful that their parents, by placing the seal of the covenant upon them, did put them in the way to receive the blessing.

Infer. II. If baptized children are, in any sense, members of the church, then how awfully deficient are all our churches in their duty to their

children! As baptism is a seal belonging to the church of Christ, and is a seal of the righteousness of faith, so it certainly implies some relationship between the church and the subject to whom it is applied. If they are not members by birth, nor by expressed condition or promise, as parties in the covenant, yet their being circumcised under the Old, and baptized under the New Testament dispensation, is an evidence of their membership in some sense or another; or else it is a seal that seals nothing, and that evidences or confirms nothing, and therefore is now, and always has been, an useless and unmeaning ceremony. And dare we indulge the thought that the great Head of the church would introduce an unmeaning ceremony, and then call it the *seal of the righteousness of faith*. A great proportion of baptized children are running at random, and we take no more care of them as related to the church than we do of any other children. How many of them have been solemnly and affectionately informed of their relation to the church? Yea, although they have received that very seal, which is by some called the initiating ordinance into the church, and by all is recognized as constituting some relationship to the church, yet even that relationship is not practically recognized: we appear unwilling to own them as the lambs of the flock; we exercise no discipline over

them ; do not very often make them the subjects of special prayer. No wonder there is so much difficulty and division about the proper subjects of baptism. Parental and ecclesiastical unfaithfulness and neglect of duty will invariably involve us in this kind of trouble. The longer duty is neglected, the more difficult will it be for us to return to it. The unfaithfulness of those churches and parents, who practice infant baptism, have induced many to question the propriety of the practice. When they perceive such a great proportion of those, who are some way related to the church, almost entirely neglected in their religious education, they are ready to conclude that baptism is nothing ; but this conclusion is so glaringly absurd and unscriptural, that they persuade themselves that infants are not the proper subjects of baptism, and of course not fit subjects of promise. Now if we were as a church faithful *to command our children and our household after us*, we should soon have our numbers and graces increased ; all difficulties on this subject would speedily disappear, and God would be glorified in the midst of us. Our dear children and youth are too much neglected in this gospel land. And I do sincerely pray that Infinite Wisdom would speedily direct us to a method that would remedy this awfully increasing evil. May the Holy Spirit operate upon

all our hearts in such a manner that the church and every Christian parent will be constrained so to pray, so to live, and so to educate their children, that there may be a thorough reformation.

Infer. III. Christian parents may experience much comfort where churches are faithful in the discharge of their duties to their baptized children. When parents are called to bid an eternal adieu to all terrestrial things, and leave behind them a young family, how consoling the thought that they are subject to the watch and special care of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ! Their orphan children find in the church a parent, and a friend to direct their steps, when their earthly parent and guide is no more. When they are incapable of directing their own best mode of conduct; and when their nearest and dearest earthly friends forsake them—then the church appears as a very present help in trouble, and takes them affectionately by the hand, and leads them to the Lamb of Calvary. The pious parent dies, and leaves his dear children under the care of the church, well persuaded that they will be carefully educated for heaven. The church will adopt these orphans as their own children, and teach them how to think and act for eternity. As they are the children of the covenant, they will be the special subjects of their prayers. And

what can be more comforting to a pious parent in the near approach of death? It will greatly mitigate the parting struggle, when he sees his children provided for, as it respects their education for eternity. But on the contrary, how distressing and harassing the reflection to a pious parent—‘I am about to leave a young family, with none sufficiently interested to pray for them, and to direct them in the path of piety and virtue; they are to receive the first rudiments of their education from the example and precepts of a wicked world—none truly interested in their spiritual welfare, none engaged to pray for and with them, and to watch over them, and in parental love and tenderness to reprove them for their follies.’ What a heart-rending thought to an affectionate and pious parent! Hence we are clearly taught that our unfaithfulness deprives us of much of the comfort of religion which we might otherwise enjoy. We attend so little to the active and every-day duties of religion, that we are almost strangers to near, sweet, and frequent communion with God. If we are unfaithful, our children are deprived of much good instruction, and the benefits of a pious example. We are also deprived of that satisfaction and peace of mind which legitimately results from a faithful and conscientious discharge of duty; we feel the pain and

agony of soul arising from the conduct of disobedient children; for being destitute of the restraints of a pious education and wholesome discipline, they naturally relapse into a course of conduct which causes the pious heart to bleed. Faithful parental discipline, with a careful and prayerful observance of the conditions of the covenant, will insure to our children the covenant blessing of the God of Abraham, and our children will use it and bless our memories.

Infer. IV. If we are made the visible objects of so many of the means of grace, by being in covenant, how great are our obligations to God, and how blameworthy if we misimprove them! God has withheld nothing from us that was necessary for our salvation, and the eternal welfare of our posterity. Our dear children are made as fit subjects of promise as we are, for both are included in the same covenant. The seal of the covenant is placed upon them, and an invaluable blessing secured to the humble penitent by the express promise and oath of God. Parents may carry their dear children to God, and ask his covenant blessing upon them. O what a rich and glorious privilege! What an unspeakable favor! Yea, you may carry your children, even your little children to Jesus, and he will not turn you away empty. He will welcome you, and take

those children in his arms, and bless them. If you give them to him in covenant, he will take infinitely better care of them than you can. He will remove all their spiritual maladies, and prepare them for a seat at his right hand in the kingdom of glory. Here, then, is an opportunity for every parent to secure for their children a rich legacy; a legacy that may be entailed to children's children down to the Millennium. How highly should we all prize such a privilege! How diligently improve it! Through this same covenant the door of mercy is opened to all the families of the earth, so that 'whosoever will may take of the water of life freely.' Unfaithful and wicked parents *shut the door*, and thus prevent their children from entering into the marriage supper of the Lamb. Dare we trifle with such blessings? Shall we neglect such privileges, and thus peril the salvation of our own souls and that of our children? Shall we break covenant ourselves, and encourage our children in the wicked and rebellious course? Remember, your children are interested in all your conduct, for you are their *example*. You can insure to them a rich blessing. You may entail upon them a legacy of infinite more intrinsic worth than the most splendid patrimony any child ever received from an earthly parent. By complying with the con-

ditions of this covenant, you have a grand opportunity to enrich your children for eternity, and contribute largely towards the redemption of the world. I would give more for the paternal benediction of an Isaac and Jacob, and the covenant blessing of the God of Abraham, than for all the riches of the world without those covenanted blessings. How infinitely great will be our guilt if we neglect such an opportunity to secure the richest possible blessing for our children !

Infer. V. We may learn from this subject that a strict conformity to the conditions of the covenant will instrumentally insure the conversion of our children. God is true to his promise ; and when he said he would be a God to Abraham and his seed, he meant what he said, and he intends to do so, and he has done what was implied in that promise. ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’ There is no exception to this rule, and there can be none as long as God remains true to his word. Fidelity on the part of parents will prevent a cold and dull formality in religion ; for the practice of penitence, candor, humility and sincerity will frown upon all hypocrisy in their children. Such an example will render formality and hypocrisy unfashionable in the domestic circle. Then shall we realize the fulfilment of that promise : ‘Out of

the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.' Our children being under the continued influence of a pious example, every thing will naturally contribute to bring them to the foot of the cross; and the whole church being pledged to pray for them, and feeling, with the parent, responsible for their religious instruction, there can be nothing to hinder their lisping forth the praises of the dear Redeemer in their youth. It ought to be the highest ambition of every Christian parent to secure by every possible means the early conversion of their children. It gives them an extended opportunity for doing good: they have a proportionably longer time to be workers together with God in converting the world. Besides, their early conversion will save them many achings of heart, and add greatly to the happiness of both parents and children.

CHAPTER II.

“ And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree ; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”

ROM. xi. 17, 18.

IN every age of the world there have always existed some of the true worshippers of God, and thus a remnant according to the election hath always been preserved. There have been great and desolating declensions in the church, so that sometimes scarcely a vestige of vital piety could be discovered ; but still the continued existence of the church, and the revivals of religion with which she has been favored in every age, are decided evidences that this remnant has, at no time, become entirely extinct. Vital religion had got to a very low ebb at the time of our Saviour's advent, even so low that men in the bosom of the church were his principal persecutors, and his most inveterate enemies. The Jews, to whom he

was specially sent, and to whom he directed his particular attention, and who enjoyed the peculiar benefits of his labors, and who were in fellowship with him in the same church, were so filled with infidelity that Christ himself marvelled at their unbelief. Notwithstanding this low state of religion, the remnant of true piety was found in this very church. The Jews, as a nation, and as the peculiar people of God, had become awfully corrupt; but they rigidly regarded the external forms of their religion, although there was very little of true piety among them. All that were truly pious received Jesus as the Christ, and many of their number were converted to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, yet as a nation they were cut off on account of their unbelief.

In the text we are explicitly informed that some of the branches were broken off. The Jews, for their infidelity, were separated from the good olive tree, or the true church of God, and could no longer be partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Some belonging to the wild olive tree were grafted into the good olive tree. These were the believing gentiles, as you will find by examining the text and context. They were grafted into that good olive tree from which the unbelieving Jews were broken off. Those who were grafted into this good olive tree, in the place of

those who were broken off, do partake of the root and fatness of that good olive tree ; they partake of all the promises and privileges, the graces and ordinances, and the spiritual blessings and benefits which belonged, by covenant, to Abraham and his seed.

Doct. *God has but one church in the world, or the Jewish and Christian church are essentially and radically the same under two different dispensations.*

I. This doctrine is proved from the oneness of the divine character. He is the unchangeable God. That which was right in itself, in the view of God, in one age of the world, will be right in every age, although God, as a sovereign, may have different ways of communicating and exhibiting truth. God prescribed a particular way for sinners to approach into his presence, and acknowledge their submission to him under the Mosaic dispensation. The appointment of these peculiar and special rites and ceremonies was an act of divine sovereignty, and was peculiarly calculated for the pupilage of mankind in that age of the world. It was suited to the genius and capacity of men as just emerged from a state of idolatry, and operated as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, for Jesus Christ has always been the centre of attraction in the church ever since its organ-

ization, and the alpha and omega of all our hopes of salvation, for he is revealed as the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

It is a fact that there was a church organized and established in the world long before the advent of the Messiah. There are different opinions as to the time when this church was established. It is thought by many, and not without reason, that the church was first organized and established immediately after the fall of man. This much is certain, that the covenant of grace in its spirit and efficacy was revealed to man a long time previous to the call of Abraham, for it would be uncharitable to suppose that all were lost previous to that time, especially as the promise of a Saviour was revealed to our first parents immediately after the fall. Besides, the sacrificial economy was in use in the family of our first parents; and we cannot suppose that such a method of worship was introduced without divine authority. We have therefore some reason to believe the existence of the visible church in the earliest ages of the world.

The visible church embraces all in every part of the world who profess to be the people of God. This visible church was first publicly organized in the family of Abraham. All who were included in that covenant made with Abraham belong to the visible church, and are entitled to all the

privileges of members as soon as they comply with the stipulations contained in that covenant. All the Israelites belonged to the visible church, and hence it is said Moses was in the church in the wilderness. Under the gospel dispensation professing Christians constitute the visible church. All particular churches in every country, and among all denominations, who are organized according to the constitution and rules of the Bible in those essential doctrines which are the life and support of all vital piety, are parts of Christ's visible church, or family on earth. If there be a difference in their modes of worship, and in some doctrines not essential to salvation, yet this will not destroy the oneness of the church. It will still continue to be one great whole, and in the final day of accounts we shall all mutually feel a perfect willingness and pleasure in confessing all our former errors, and in embracing one common Saviour as the Lord our righteousness and salvation. The Jews did publicly profess to be the real people of God ; and it is a solemn truth God did recognize them to be his peculiar and chosen people. His divine and fatherly care was constantly exercised towards them for their protection and preservation. Though He did 'visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes, yet his loving kindness he would not

'utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail.'

Since the advent of the Saviour, Christians do profess to be the real people of God. It is also true that God recognizes them to be his covenanted people. 'He leads them beside the still waters, and makes them to lie down in green pastures.' He engages 'to be with them always, even to the end of the world; to keep them by his power through faith unto salvation;' that 'they shall want no good thing;' and that 'all things shall work together for good to them that love God.' Both then profess to belong to the true church, and both are recognized as such by God himself. Those Jews who were in reality what they professed to be under the former dispensation were as much indebted for their salvation to the efficacy of the atonement as the sincere Christian is under the present dispensation. And there were some among them who continued truly devoted to God until the advent and death of the Saviour. But those Jews who rejected the Saviour were broken off from their visible relationship to the church, because of their unbelief; whereas, those Jews who professed cordially to receive the Messiah, still continued in the visible church, and the converted and believing Gentiles were grafted in among them, and thus the believing Jews and

Gentiles were united in one body. The Jews according to the uniform usages of the church brought their children with them, and were the children of the converted Gentiles to be left behind? The chief difference in the church under the Abrahamic or Mosaic and Christian dispensation, consists in external rites, forms, and modes of instruction and worship arising wholly from the different circumstances under which they were placed. God saw proper to reveal the doctrines of atonement, and the mediation of a Saviour, more obscurely and yet by visible objects, as being more adapted to their capacity in that they had just emerged from idolatry, under the ancient, than under the gospel dispensation. They received their instruction through the medium of types and emblems which 'shadowed forth good things to come.' Now these very same truths are more clearly revealed in an entirely different mode, and by different forms of worship and instruction, so that there is no necessity for the continuance of those burdensome institutions and bloody rites. To suppose that the Jewish and Christian church are essentially and radically different is as unreasonable as to suppose that a man, in his maturity, is not the same person he was when a child. When a child he had far less knowledge, and was instructed in a different manner from what he

is in maturity, and yet it is the same person and the same church, and has the same unchangeable God for its author or head. The Jewish church was like a child under tutors and governors, and the Christian church like a son more matured, and an heir of God nearer its inheritance through Jesus Christ. The one was in her pupilage, the other in her maturity. As the one only true God is the author of both, so each must be the true church. For we cannot suppose that God would organize any thing but the true church. The circumstances attending the organization or rather re-organization of the church at the moment of the solemn transaction, are proof of the unity of the church. The passover was the most solemn and significant feast under the Jewish dispensation. Christ was always present at that feast. At the last passover that he attended, he instituted the gospel passover, in which he recognized himself as the atoning lamb; for taking the bread and breaking it, he said, 'Take, eat, this is my body broken for sin.' This was the very moment when the church of God was re-organized under the Christian dispensation. They did not leave the room, but while they were commemorating the love of God in their emancipation from Egyptian bondage, in eating the passover lamb, which typically directed their minds to the Saviour of

sinners, how easy and natural this transition from the Jewish to the Christian church ! The parts of the lamb were laid aside, or all consumed, and the bread, a part of the sacrificial supper, is used by the Saviour as the symbol of his body, and the wine, for wine was always used at the passover, as the symbol of his blood. Here we see by his official act, as high-priest, the Jewish passover is superseded by the gospel passover, himself being the paschal lamb. The Jewish church so runs into the gospel church, and becomes so completely amalgamated with it, that an inspired apostle hath said, 'If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' They were all members of the Jewish church when they sat down to the paschal supper, and arose members of the gospel or Christian church. This is all the organization or re-organization of the church under the gospel dispensation that is left on divine record. Christ organized the church before he was even falsely proved an impostor, while he was a regular member of the church, and before he or his disciples were turned out of the synagogue, if they were ever turned out. Here was the very organization of the Christian church, and organized by regular members of the Jewish church, and organized in such a way as to entail all the promises upon the church of God.

We never learn that the apostles, after this memorable night, ever met with the Jews at their pass-over feast. They let go of the shadow for the reality; they let go the type that they might receive and enjoy the antetype. May not the divine hand be distinctly recognized in all this solemn and deeply interesting transaction? Here we see how wonderfully and mysteriously the Jewish church is swallowed up in the Christian, or how they both become, in the estimation of the truly pious, and according to the providential dealings of God towards each, amalgamated or united into one. They must therefore be *one*, for there is but one God, and one way of salvation, and that is through the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ.

To suppose the Jewish and Christian church essentially and radically different, or to be two distinct churches, is highly derogatory to the divine character. It supposes God to be changeable and imperfect, and limited in his calculations. It implies a censure on his conduct towards the Jews, for He gave them to understand that they were the true church. It also implies that the groundwork of the sinner's justification before God is so altered that it is now an essentially and radically different thing from what it was originally. But what is there essentially different in

spirit, whether we look forward to a Saviour through types, shadows, or figures, or back to a Saviour through the ordinances and institutions of the gospel? Is not the principle the same? Do not all look to the same source for salvation, and depend on the same blood of atonement? Are not the same graces of the Spirit, and similar exercises of soul required of all, whether under the dispensation of the Mosaic economy, or the Christian dispensation? Are not repentance and faith just as necessary under the divine administration, in one age of the world as another? Hence I conclude there cannot, in the very nature of the case, be more than one true church of God in the world.

II. That the Jewish and Christian church are essentially one and the same, may be proved from the fact that they are both founded on the covenant of grace, or redemption.

A covenant is an agreement between different parties on certain and specified conditions, or it is a conditional proposition made by one party to another; an assent to this proposition by the other party constitutes it a covenant; or it is a ratification of the proposition. Grace is a favor bestowed upon the unworthy; or it is an exercise of mercy and goodness to the ill-deserving. In a covenant of works there is no exercise of mercy.

Every act is measured by strict and impartial justice. Do and live, are its only conditions. By the covenant of grace, in its practical results, we understand God's offer of favor and eternal life to guilty rebels through Jesus Christ. That which is required of man in this covenant is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the great atoning sacrifice for sin, and a godly sorrow for sin working repentance unto salvation: the sincerity and genuineness of these must be proved by cordial love to God, and cheerful obedience to all the Divine commands. God, on his part, pledges eternal life to all who comply with the conditions of the covenant. When, therefore, any individual exercises faith in Christ, and repentance for his sin, he cordially assents to the covenant, and is thereby initiated into it. The covenant of grace was, in spirit, and in its practical efficacy, revealed in some good degree to Adam, Enoch, Noah, and other patriarchs who lived previous to Abraham; and their cordial compliances with its terms secured their salvation. It was more clearly and fully revealed to Abraham in that covenant made with him, of which circumcision was a seal or token. Here the church was organized in a more visible manner; and Abraham complied with this visible organization by applying the seal of circumcision to himself and family.

If it can be made to appear that this covenant, made with Abraham, required faith, or real religion of the heart as its condition, and a promise of eternal life to a compliance with its conditions, it will be abundantly manifest that it was based upon the covenant of grace, and essentially and radically the same with the requirements of the gospel.

That faith and true religion was the condition of the Abrahamic covenant is manifest from the very words of the covenant: 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect; and I will make my covenant between me and thee.' Here God requires of Abraham that he should walk before God, and be perfect and upright. Does not this require the existence of true religion in the heart and practice? Is anything more required of Christians under the gospel economy? It is certain that circumcision was a seal or token of the Abrahamic covenant; for it is explicitly said: 'Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.' But an inspired apostle hath said, that 'Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had, yet being uncircumcised.' While circumcision was a token of the covenant, it was also 'a seal of the righteousness of faith.' Now, what

are we to understand by the righteousness of faith, if it does not mean justification by faith in Jesus Christ? If this be its meaning, then it embraces the whole true religion. But if it does not mean this, then where is the propriety of the apostles calling it a seal of that faith, which was accounted to Abraham for righteousness, and thus made him the father of all them that believe? If true religion was not required by the Abrahamic covenant, then what authority have we to believe that there was any true religion previous to the advent of the Saviour?

Unbelief debarred from a participation of the benefits of that covenant. This is expressly asserted by an inspired apostle, where he represents unbelief as the chief barrier against the Israelites' entrance into the promised land. It is admitted by all that the Abrahamic covenant is the foundation of the Jewish church. But the Jews were broken off from this very church, or olive tree, because of their unbelief, which certainly shows that faith was a condition of the covenant. It must, therefore, be essentially such a gracious covenant as to secure the salvation of those who, from the heart, were in that covenant.

God promises to Abraham, 'that he will be a God to him, and to his seed after him.' What more could God have promised? Has he pro-

mised any more to Christians under the gospel dispensation? He gave himself to Abraham and his seed after him, if he would keep his covenant. God uses the same kind of language to Christians under the gospel economy: 'I will be unto them a God, and they shall be unto me a people.' God did all he consistently could do for the Jews, and has he done any more for Christians? 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God.' Could the Jews, or can we ask, anything more?

Again, it is written, 'If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Those who are truly converted and belong to Christ are Abraham's, and belong to the covenant. Is not this very clearly recognizing them as possessing the same spirit, and sustaining the same relationship to God? This exhibits the oneness of the two churches, and that that faith, love and repentance which constitutes us the disciples of Christ does also constitute us the seed of Abraham, which very clearly shows, that if true religion were required under the Christian dispensation, it was also equally obligatory under the Abrahamic covenant. Hence we are taught that both churches are founded upon the same gracious covenant; but upon the same promises; dependent upon the same blood of atonement, and

must all look to the same covenant-keeping God for protection, and for its perpetuity. Is not then the Christian church the continuance, and enlargement, in its privileges, of the church that was first visibly organized in the family of Abraham, or that church which God hath recognized as his dwelling-place in every age, and whose gates he loves more than all the dwellings of Jacob?

III. The qualifications for membership are the same under both dispensations.

Under the gospel dispensation holiness of heart as well as a holy and circumspect walk and deportment is required of every disciple of Christ. It is regeneration and its fruits that constitute the radical difference between saints and sinners. Under the former economy God said, 'Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts, and be no man stiff-necked.' Are we not here explicitly taught that newness of life and holiness of heart were indispensably necessary to constitute any one a member of the Jewish church? There is very great emphasis placed on the circumcision of the heart, for Paul, under inspiration, said, and certainly he knew what a Jew ought to be, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circum-

cision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.' The chief thing that God observed, and particularly noticed, were the feelings of the heart ; for ' as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he' in the sight of God. This is confirmed by the express words of the covenant: ' I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' God required as much experimental religion of the Jews as he does now of Christians. ' This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments : thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.' Hence we are taught that the whole heart and soul were required in the discharge of every duty. The heart must be right with God, or all their religion would be a dull formality, and presumptuous hypocrisy. The ordinances of the Jewish religion could not be properly observed without heart-religion.

Every part of the Old Testament dispensation had its correspondent under the New Testament economy. Circumcision was instituted by the express command of God as a token of the covenant between God and his servant Abraham, and ' he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.' Circumcision was not the initiating ordinance into the church, but ' a seal of the

righteousness of faith,' which righteousness is a justifying righteousness. It was imputed or reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. The paschal lamb that was slain, and his blood sprinkled upon the door-posts, had a special reference to the Saviour who was crucified, and whose blood was shed for the remission of sins. The feast of the passover corresponded with the gospel feast, or the Lord's supper, and hence Christ is called our passover. None were permitted to eat the passover before they were circumcised. 'There shall no stranger eat thereof; but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it, and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.' Before this token of the covenant was applied, they could not be entitled to the privilege of members of the Jewish church. As faith was necessary in order to become fit subjects for circumcision, even so much so that without faith their circumcision was made uncircumcision, it hence follows that faith was as indispensable a qualification in order to be circumcised, as it is in order to be a fit subject for baptism. Faith was

as necessary to become a member of the Jewish church as it is for admission into the Christian church. It was as much impossible to please God without faith, under the ancient dispensation, as it is now. It was the duty of every Jew to adhere rigidly to all the rites and ceremonies of the law. They were positively enjoined by the great Lawgiver, and could not be neglected without incurring guilt and the Divine displeasure; and yet the Lord says: 'Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.' Why is the solemn meeting called iniquitous? Why are these divinely commanded external rites and ceremonies an abomination unto the Lord? Are they not odious to God simply because there is no heart in them? Was it not because they had nothing but lip-service? Was there not a want of humility, and sincere and penitent obedience to God in the heart? God has always loved to see vital piety in his creatures. Experimental piety was the same thing in Moses, Joshua and David that it was in Paul, Peter and John. Vital piety was anticipated and expected to be in the hearts and practice of the professors of religion in every age of the church and of the world. Are we not constrained to admit that the

qualifications necessary to constitute membership were essentially and in spirit the same in both the Jewish and Christian church? Is not then the true church of God *one* and the same under the two different dispensations?

IV. That the Jewish and Christian church are the same and only true church of God in the world, is further proved from the fact that the rules of moral conduct and discipline have been essentially the same under each dispensation.

The command of God to the Jews was, that they should love the Lord God with all their heart; that they should love their neighbor as themselves; that they should not vex or oppress a stranger; and that if they perceived an enemy's ox or ass going astray they must certainly bring it back. Hence they were taught to do good to all, not excepting their enemies. This perfectly accords with the precepts of the New Testament. Christians are commanded to love God with all the heart: to love one another, and to improve every opportunity to do good to all. Love your enemies; pray for those that despitefully use you and persecute you; and render blessing for cursing. Hence the fundamental laws by which the true church has been governed, are the same in spirit and in the letter in every age of the world. They produce the same effect upon the conduct

and moral character of mankind. All kinds of vice, by whatever name they were called, were explicitly prohibited. The same things were repeated and confirmed by the precept and example of the New Testament economy.

Idolatry, profanity, lying, fraud, oppression, envy, revenge, fornication, and all kindred vices were forbidden in the Old and New Testaments. The discipline in each were very similar, and their object the same. It was to reclaim, and not destroy an offending brother. 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him.' By which we are taught that it was esteemed a duty and a privilege to endeavor to reclaim a brother who had wandered from the path of rectitude. And do not such instructions agree perfectly with the precepts taught by the Saviour? 'If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault.' If the offending brother is reclaimed, a brother is gained, is forgiven, and restored to his standing in the church. When a Jew repented of his sin, he was directed to bring his sin-offering, to lay his hand on the head of his victim, as an expression of his penitence and desire of pardon and forgiveness. It became the duty of the priest to make atonement for him by offering his victim, and then he was forgiven, and restored to his standing in

the church. There were some different rites and forms pursued to bring about the same results ; but these different forms terminated in the same point, and produced the same kind of feelings towards sin, and reconciliation to God and man, and thus were evidence of the unity of design in the discipline of each of the churches. If an offender in the Christian church remains obstinate and self-willed, and perseveres in his sin, he is cast out, and treated as an heathen man and publican. There is a correspondent law in the Jewish church. 'The soul that doeth aught presumptuously, (whether he be born in the land, or a stranger,) the same reproacheth the Lord ; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.' Because he hath despised the work of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off : his iniquity shall be upon him. The rule of moral conduct and discipline breathes the same spirit in each church. There are some different measures, forms and ceremonies practised, but they are intended to accomplish the same end, produce the same kind of reformation and moral character, and to excite the exercises of the same graces of the Spirit. To generate love to God and to man ; and produce universal peace and happiness, is the grand design of the rites, ceremonies, and discipline of each church.

V. That the Jewish and Christian church are essentially one is further proved from the fact that the sacraments and ordinances are similar in their import and design. Circumcision under the Jewish economy was a seal or token of faith, and hence is called a 'seal of the righteousness of faith,' which Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised; which shows that he first believed, and was then circumcised together with his household in token of *his* faith. Baptism has precisely the same import under the present dispensation. The jailer, as soon as he possessed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, 'was baptized, he and all his straightway, as a token of *his* faith. The eunuch was informed that he might be baptised, 'if thou believest with all thine heart.' Baptism is the seal of faith in a Saviour, or of a gracious covenant. When, therefore, any person dedicates himself, or his children and household to Christ in baptism, it is a seal or token of his faith, and of his covenant relation to God.

Circumcision took away a part of the flesh, and plainly denoted the necessity of a change of heart, and that the old man must be put off, and that the new man must be put on. Hence we are taught the entire corruption of the carnal heart, for surely we should not be commanded to put off the old man with his deeds, if it were not enmity

against God, and radically wrong. Hence the rites of the Jewish economy clearly taught the doctrine of human depravity, and the necessity of a change of heart.

And does not baptism teach the same important and momentous truth, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost? When, therefore, water is applied in baptism to infants or to adults, it teaches the native depravity of the human heart, and the need of being cleansed, or washed in the laver of regeneration, and sanctified and renewed by the Holy Ghost.

The import and design of circumcision and baptism are the same. They are the seal of the same righteousness of faith, a sign of the same gracious covenant, designate the same native moral character, and necessity of regeneration, and imply the exercise of faith in the same Saviour, and point to the same blood of atonement, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Abraham was required to believe and be circumcised because God had made a covenant with him and his seed. It then sealed a covenant. It did not make the covenant, nor initiate the subject into it. The hearers of the apostles were to repent and be baptized, because the promise was unto them and to their children. And to what promise does the apostle allude, but the promise on which the church

is based, even the promise made to Abraham, in whose seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

There is a more striking similarity in the import and design of the passover. The paschal lamb intimated the safety of all who placed themselves under the cover and protection of the blood of their atoning sacrifice. So Christ is exhibited as the 'Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.'

The killing of the lamb, the sprinkling of the blood on the door-posts to save them from the destroying angel, and the roasting of it in the fire, are so many rites very clearly typifying the awful sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and the salvation of all those who take shelter under the blood of the atonement, and receive Christ as their great passover lamb. Are not these same truths strikingly exhibited to us in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Christ is called by an inspired apostle, 'our passover who is sacrificed for us.' If we, with these marks of similarity and spirituality, denominate the one a political community, or at most, a political or secular theocracy, and the other an ecclesiastical organization, do we not separate what God hath joined together? And then one or two questions naturally arise, which cannot be very easily answered.

Where was God's true church previous to the advent of Jesus Christ? Or was the world without any true church till Christ came into the world? When did a regular organization take place, or when was the true church of God organized? It will not do to say, that it was organized when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, for that would be grafting it upon the old stock, and then it must still remain only a political community or a kind of political theocracy.

VI. Those who were members of the one church, were also members of the other, and that without being newly initiated, as has always been the custom in going from one church to another and different church.

We have no account that Christ or his disciples ever separated themselves from the Jewish church. Christ himself was a member of that church, and never was broken off from it, or excommunicated from it, till after the new reorganization of the church in the institution of the Lord's Supper. He was circumcised and always partook of the passover, and was always present, or it would have been noticed as a charge against him.

The passover was a Jewish institution, very dissimilar from all other institutions. It was commenced and commemorated by divine appointment. It belonged by a special, by a divine

arrangement to the Jewish church, and none were permitted to participate in it but regular members. While it reminded the Jews of their remarkable deliverance from Egyptian bondage, it also prefigured or typified the Christian passover, or sacrament. As the paschal lamb pointed to the Saviour himself as the great atoning sacrifice for sin, so the passover pointed to the Lord's Supper, or sacrament. The one typified or prefigured a Saviour to come; the other is commemorative of a Saviour that has already come, and who has made the predicted atonement by sufferings and death. Christ, by his own act, proved them to be one institution in spirit, or rather parallel and corresponding institutions under two different dispensations; for when he for the last time celebrated the passover, he took the bread and the wine, and gave it to his disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.' And this he did, while at the passover. By this act Christ instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and commanded it to be commemorated or kept in every succeeding age till he come. He did not by this act, either directly or indirectly, disband or disor-

ganize the Jewish church ; neither did he convey the idea that they were then, by partaking of this bread and cup, or sacrament, become members of a new and different church. They were still members of the same church ; and we have no authority from Scripture to conclude that we are members of a church radically different in spirit, or in design, from the ancient Jewish or Abrahamic church, though we are under a different dispensation, where the same truths and doctrines are communicated in a different way, or by different rites. There is no new covenant made, if by new we are to understand that which has never been revealed, for the covenant of grace is unalterably the same, and all the gracious provisions of the Abrahamic covenant are continued and perpetuated under the Christian dispensation, in which spiritual light shines brighter, and is more clearly revealed than under the former dispensation. That was but the dawning of the day ; this is the sun rising in its strength, splendor and glory, and will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. There being no new, or essentially different covenant, and having no account when the apostles passed out of one church into the other, we may naturally conclude their membership has never been changed ; or in other words, they were always members of one and the same

church; for certainly, if they had ever separated themselves from that church to which they were originally united, we should have had some intimations of it somewhere in the New Testament. This would have been an event of the utmost importance to the world in every subsequent generation, and certainly at such a momentous season and significant era as the Pentecostal revival, we should, if ever, have heard something about the change of their ecclesiastical relationship; but at the close of that glorious work it is simply stated, 'and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.' Hence there was no church but the one to which the immediate followers of Christ were connected. They never changed their relationship to the Jewish church, except that which was implied in the institution of the eucharist at the last passover, which our Lord himself attended. Being members of the church under both dispensations, it necessarily follows that the Jewish and Christian church were radically the same.

VII. That the Jewish and Christian church are essentially the same true church of God, may be urged from the fact that he is equally the great Head of both, and they are represented as his house, or building. In the Old Testament, the

church is called the spouse. If the church be a spouse, she must have a husband. The Lord of hosts is represented as the husband of the church, who has the special and providential government of it in all her troubles. He supports and protects her, as a husband does his wife, and is bound by his divine promise to prevent the gates of hell from prevailing against her: 'Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.' But, in the New Testament, the church is called the bride, the Lamb's wife. Nothing, then, can be more manifest than the important truth that both churches are one; for it is absurd and inconsistent to suppose that Christ has two true churches in the world.

Again: The church is called God's building, fitly framed together; but Christ is the foundation on which it is built. It is said: 'My servant, Moses, is faithful in all mine house.' By house is understood the Jewish church, over which Moses presided. 'But Christ was counted worthy of more glory than Moses; inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more glory than the house.' Again: 'Moses was verily faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold

fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' This was Christ's house, for he built it, and he was a son over his own house. His house was the Christian church; 'of whose house are we;' referring to believers, or professing Christians. But in this house (that is, Christ's) Moses was faithful. Hence the Jewish and Christian church are essentially, and in spirit and design, the same true church of God.

Inference. If the Jewish and Christian church are radically the same, and if the qualifications for admission are the same, then the children of believers sustain a similar relation, and are entitled to equal privileges in each church. If the children of believers, under the Christian dispensation, had been deprived of or denied the privileges granted by covenant to Jewish children, it is a matter of such vital importance, that it could not have been omitted in the divine record, or in the organization of the Christian church. The children of believers, even where only one of them is a professed Christian, are recognized as holy; that is, under the protection of the covenant. Where, in the divine record, or even by the decisions of the primitive Christian church, has God excluded children from the privileges granted to Jewish parents? If any such exclusion had ever taken place, it would have been such a per-

fect innovation as would have insured it a prominent place in all ecclesiastical records; but there is no such event on record. I have never learned that the children of Christian are intellectually inferior to the children of Jewish parents. Faith had just as distinguished a place under the Jewish as under the Christian dispensation. Children are children in every age of the church and of the world, and are to be treated as such. The children in every age of the world are equally capable of exercising faith. As much, then, will be required of children under the more simple and clear dispensation of the Gospel, as under that dispensation which exhibited by various typical rites, and was only a shadow of good things to come. If it was proper to circumcise Jewish children, on the ground of the faith of parents, or as a seal of the parents' faith or covenant, it is equally proper to baptize children; and it cannot be omitted without a neglect of duty and a breach of covenant. Is it right or equal to say that the children of the Jews were the children of the covenant, but the children of Christians are not? and that, too, when each of the churches is based upon the same covenant and promises? May Jewish parents bring their children to the church, place the token of the covenant upon them, and put them under the shadow of the covenant for

protection, and must Christian parents be denied this privilege, and leave their children behind them? Did Peter reason thus on the day of Pentecost, when he said: 'The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' It does appear to me a peculiarly interesting and encouraging fact for parents who love their children, that Peter should be inspired to refer to this promise, and bring in children to share the covenant blessings of the God of Abraham, at the time when there was such a universal excitement, and the minds of all appeared to be entirely enveloped. In this great excitement children were not forgotten, as being a party interested in the covenant. His enlarged and inspired benevolence brought in the dear children for a share of the divine blessing. It was not possible to forget them, however much his soul was thrilled with the infinitely rapturous and interesting scene before him. Have Christian parents lost their sensibility, that they can leave their children to lie in the open field of impiety, and to form their moral character from the unholy influences with which they are surrounded?

CHAPTER III.

PARENTAL FIDELITY REWARDED.

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”—GENESIS, xviii. 19.

THE Lord knew the pious patriarch, that he would be faithful, and that he would ‘command his children and his household after him,’ and therefore knew what to promise. Abraham had been tried. There was no question concerning his piety, his fidelity, and his love to God. He placed the most implicit confidence in the divine promise, when everything seemed to militate against its fulfilment. Against ‘hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations.’ God positively predicted a blessing upon the nations descending from the posterity of this venerable patriarch, and with them all the nations of the earth were to participate. This blessing was predetermined. God had a definite plan by

which it was to be effected ; and one of the means was the parental faithfulness of Abraham.

The text suggests some arguments to encourage parental faithfulness.

I. If parents are truly faithful, God hath engaged 'that their children shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' What he hath said he will make good, for he is not a man that he should lie. You may set it down for a certainty, that if a child is 'trained up in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.' The impressions that are made upon the minds of children are deep and lasting, and will have an influence in forming their moral character. Hence, if they are taught to govern their passions and to bridle their tongues, and have good examples, not only of morality but of vital and every-day piety, constantly placed before them, it will have a powerful and salutary effect upon all their subsequent conduct. But if children do not perceive the fruits of true godliness in the lives of their parents ; if the parents' religion is mere morality and an external profession ; and if, when they converse with their children, they do not enter into the very feelings of the child, and if possible discover the secret movings and intents of the heart ; and if they do not manifest to their children that the religion they

profess is very searching, and reaches to all the secret feelings and motives of the heart; these children will be prone to form a very unfavorable opinion of the glorious truths of the Gospel. The children of such parents will imbibe the most bitter hatred and deep-rooted prejudice against the religion of their parents. By your every-day life and conduct, teach your children that your religion is of the heart, and has a sanctifying influence upon all your conduct and conversation; yea, and by your holy example command your children and your household after you, and the divine promise secures a blessing upon your offspring. They will never be satisfied with a superficial religion. Be faithful, as Abraham was, and the covenant blessing will rest upon your children; and as Isaac called upon the God of Abraham, so will your children call upon your God to remember the oath he sware unto you. As the faithfulness of Abraham was remembered in Isaac, so your faithfulness will not be forgotten in your children. If you are faithful, like Abraham, many Isaacs will be found among your posterity, who will rise up and bless your memory. If you train up your children for God, and in faith consecrate them to his service, God will not refuse to own them, for obedience will be their happiness and their life. If the present generation were truly

faithful, their children's children, yea, unborn generations down to the latest ages, would keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment, and participate in the blessings of renewing grace.

Some, perhaps, are ready to inquire, why are the children of professedly pious parents in so many instances wicked, disobedient, and rebellious? It cannot be because God has broken his promise, for 'it is impossible for God to lie.' The fact is, most of pious parents are unfaithful in many respects; and, like Eli, do not properly restrain their children. They are not sufficiently circumspect, and prayerful, and diligent in training them up in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord.' From the conduct and appearance of children and youth, have we not reason to conclude there are too many Elis, even among those who dedicated their children to the Lord? The spirit of our text assures us that when parents are faithful in training their children for God, these children will be blessed and sanctified, and will walk in the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment. Notwithstanding some of the children of pious parents are wicked and impenitent, yet the great majority of them are pious, and do now constitute the visible church; and her main dependence for her future existence and prosperity is upon the children of the covenant, and the faithfulness of God to his promise.

II. God hath positively determined a blessing upon the faithful exertions of parents. This idea is clearly implied in the text. The faithfulness of Abraham was one of the appointed means by which the Lord would bring upon him and his posterity the promised blessing. When God promises to bless, he determines the means by which to effect it. When he chooses any one to eternal life, he determines the means by which they shall be brought to the truth. So he determines the means by which all Abraham's spiritual seed are to be reconciled to God. Hence, if we were to examine the records of all our churches, we should find that its present members are composed, for the most part, of such children as were piously educated, or who have received pious instruction in Sabbath-schools, or whose parents or grandparents were truly pious and in covenant with God. True, God is not limited. In some instances, to show the sovereignty of his grace, God does take the children of the most impious and obstinate sinners, and make them heirs of God, and joint heirs of Jesus Christ. Yea, sometimes the most hardened sinners are brought to a saving knowledge of the truth; but, after all, these cases may be traced back to the covenant of some of their ancestors, whose prayers are at last answered. The pious education of children is the

ordinary and regularly divine appointed means by which the elect are to be gathered from the four winds.

It is true the children of the truly pious do not appear immediately to follow in the steps of their fathers, and we are almost ready to conclude that God has forgotten his covenant. Why is this so? In some cases it may be to try parents, and thus ascertain whether they hold on to the divine covenant and promise in spite of the greatest discouragements. If they hold on, and earnestly plead for the covenant blessings, their children will eventually be converted. In other cases it may be owing to their omission of some duties; for the most pious parents are not without their failings, and are not privileged to see the conversion of their children, and yet they may meet them on the right hand of the Son of Man. In other cases parents have been too sparing of their instructions and admonitions, and thus the early education of the children is neglected. Although these children may one day be gathered into the fold of Christ, yet, since their early religious education was neglected, God does not see fit to grant them the privilege of seeing and enjoying the fruit of their labors in this life. For infinitely holy and wise reasons they are denied this satisfaction, and yet they will learn that he was true to

his covenant, so that all the blame will rest upon parents.

III. If parents are faithful, they leave their children an entailed estate, of which they cannot be defrauded, for it is insured to them by the promise of God. This was the chief legacy Abraham left his posterity. All his descendants plead the Abrahamic covenant, nay, many went so far as to plead a presumptuous trust in it. It is a fact that, through the faithfulness of Abraham as a means, the greatest blessing mankind have, or ever can receive, has rested upon our fallen race; the gift of the Son of God to die for us, and the descent of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify us. A chosen and a pious remnant were preserved in every age of the Jewish church, that a way might be prepared for the predicted and determined blessing to be introduced into the world. Where is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Where is the covenant-keeping God of David? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? has been the prayer and the language of the truly pious in every age when pleading for some special blessing. Is it not the language of Christians now? Is it not the language of some who hear me, that the prayers of such and such a pious person will yet be answered? Their children will experience the covenant blessing of the God of

their fathers. May we not hope that there are some now waiting for an answer to the prayers of some departed, and pious, and faithful servant of Christ? Some of our church have pious, and some impenitent friends in foreign lands. The pious have been converted in answer to the prayers of God's covenant people; and have not the impenitent some in the covenant, who will give no rest to the throne of grace till they are converted? If your pious and covenant parents are now living, they are still praying for others, and perhaps for the one that sits next to you, and perhaps for you. If they are dead, have they not prayers on file in the court of heaven before the throne of grace, so to speak, that yet remain to be answered? Hence we may conclude, if parents are faithful to their covenant, and truly pious, they will entail a rich blessing upon their children; yea, upon their children's children. The treasures of this world that you leave them may very easily be taken from them; but this is a glorious and rich legacy, of which they cannot be deprived. Parents! if you are faithful, your prayers will be answered in your children, and in your children's children, to a thousand generations. Is not this a lasting and a rich legacy? God is as faithful to his covenant now as he ever was. And as an unspeakably rich blessing was entailed upon the posterity of

Abraham, so may we not certainly calculate that a blessing will be entailed upon our posterity, if we are faithful to command our children and our household after us? Dare we hesitate whether or not to perform our whole duty to our children? Dare we question the covenant faithfulness of God? Have you not a rich reward promised you for doing that which it is your happiness to do, as well as your duty? And have you not evidence that the blessing will be extended to your latest posterity? What greater encouragement can you wish? Do you wish an angel to come from high heaven, and assure you that your exertions will not be in vain? You have even more than this; you have the promise of God sealed with the blood of his own dear Son. Be assured, if you will not take encouragement from the word and promise of God, the declaration of the archangel Gabriel will not move you.

IV. Another thing implied in the text is: If parents are faithful to their covenant vows, then their children are prepared to receive a blessing. In order that God might bring a blessing upon the posterity of Abraham, it appeared necessary that he himself should be faithful. Is not this the case with parents always? Does not God accomplish his purposes of mercy now through the instrumentality of second causes as much as he ever

did ? Let us contemplate the case candidly and honestly. Here are a number of children that have always had good examples placed before them. They have been taught by precept and example to respect religion ; good and virtuous sentiments have been uniformly inculcated on their minds ; Bible truths have always been echoed in their ears ; and they have been moulded and formed under the very droppings of the sanctuary and the family altar. Now will it not be extremely difficult to eradicate these truths from their minds ? Is there not hence a preparedness to receive the blessings of sanctifying grace ? Have we not greater reason to expect a blessing in the use of the appointed means than in the neglect of them ? Are we not warranted in confidently expecting the conversion of our children, if we train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ? Children that have been religiously educated before they are converted, do act more consistently and more from principle than others. There is commonly something in their very external appearance and countenance that tells where they were educated. It is seldom that you hear them making a mock of religion, or behaving improperly in the house of God ; they have been taught better manners. But the children of unfaithful parents are directly the reverse. They are taught to disre-

spect religion, and tacitly encouraged to neglect the means of grace. They have no good and salutary example placed before them at home. The parents themselves make their attendance at the house of God a mere matter of convenience, and not the business of the Sabbath ; for if their selfish interest requires it, they hesitate not to profane the holy Sabbath. Now may we not very easily determine where God is most likely to bestow his blessing ? Who are best prepared to appreciate and be profited by the ordinary means of grace ? True, God does sometimes take the children of unfaithful parents, and make them the monuments of his sovereign grace ; but this is not his ordinary method of dealing with his creatures. I do not wish to be understood by anything I have said, as thinking that there is anything in the means themselves, or even in the faithful use of them, meritorious ; but I do assert the absolute necessity of their use, for without, the conditions are not accomplished.

V. The evil consequences of unfaithfulness and the blessed results of faithfulness on the part of parents, when set in contrast, ought to be an additional encouragement to parental fidelity. Through parental unfaithfulness the church soon becomes corrupted : erroneous principles will gradually gain credence and popularity ; vice will im-

perceptibly increase ; and immorality and infidelity will insidiously destroy the church. Look at the apostolic churches in Asia, and the primitive Christian churches in Europe and Africa. Where are they ? What vestige of ancient purity and simplicity in even the church at Rome ? The Asiatic churches are no less corrupt. In their religious rites and ceremonies, the most cruel practices prevail. With some, the more cruel and inhumane, the more praiseworthy. And to what cause can it be rationally ascribed ? Was it owing to the impurity of the apostolic doctrines ? Not at all, for the apostles ‘spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’

That Laodicean spirit which first crept into the churches was exactly calculated to make parents lax in their discipline ; inattentive to their own external deportment, and loose in their morals. Their children, from the native depravity of the heart, improved upon their parents’ vices. The corruption increased with every successive generation, until she declined into a set of rites which had nothing of Christianity but the name, and in some cases not even that. Now how would you feel to rise from the grave after a few generations shall have passed off the stage of life, to see your posterity enjoying this good land, but destitute of a Christian church, deprived of the means of

grace ; involved in heathenism, superstition, ignorance, idolatry, or plunged into all the excesses of infidelity and profanity? Does not the very thought make you shudder? Can you anticipate such a degeneracy with any calmness and composure? The primitive Christians, no doubt, thought such a declension impossible. But it has taken place in the churches of Asia Minor. Vital piety is a stranger in most of those countries, and districts that once were favored with the presence and personal ministry of the Son of God, and with the examples and holy doctrines of his apostles. The pure, undefiled and experimental religion of the Bible hath left those countries, and a few rays of light from the sun of righteousness have shone in upon our Western world ; and the hearts of many have rejoiced in the Saviour. Shall it be rehearsed to future generations that the unfaithfulness of parents have darkened our moral horizon, and shut out the clear and glorious light of the gospel? All are ready to say such a dreadful calamity must be avoided, if possible. It is possible ; it is easy. The faithful performance of the Abrahamic covenant will effectually and certainly prevent such an awful result. Let every parent do his duty in the pious education of his children and such a state of things cannot exist. Let parents be as wise in their generation as the children of this

world, and there will be an uninterrupted harvest-season, and our beloved church will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Every empty church in our land would be speedily filled, and the rising generation would more than supply the place of their parents. The pious parent when leaving the world would be cheered with the pleasing reflection that his children are polished stones in this glorious building, the church. This return to the Abrahamic covenant, and the faithful discharge of its covenanted duties, would bring us back to the divine administration of the affairs of the church to its original platform. And can there be a better plan devised than the one God has recommended in his word? While Sabbath-schools are regarded as very efficient in accomplishing the divine promises, (and I wish to give them God speed by every possible means,) yet what could they accomplish without the hearty co-operation of parents? The original divine plan has been too much neglected, to the essential injury of vital and intellectual piety. When Sabbath-schools and parental fidelity become completely amalgamated into one solid phalanx, and act in perfect harmony and concert, they will soon and very rapidly secure the conversion of the world. But as far as the Sabbath-school stands alone, unsanctioned by parental fidelity and

prayers, or supersedes parental fidelity, so far it becomes proportionably inefficient. And I do really question, whether any enterprise for the conversion of the world will be very efficient without the prayerful co-operation of parental fidelity.

Contemplate for one moment the anguish and regret that agitates and distracts the inmost soul of the unfaithful parent in his last struggle, when viewing his wicked and impenitent children around him. With his whole system paralyzed in death, and his soul on the very eve of leaving his frail and mortal body, with a wild and ghastly look, he says: 'I have neither taught you by precept nor example to love and fear God; by my silence, I have encouraged you in the ways of sin; I have been leading you to hell; O unhappy father! O ruined children! You will soon meet me in the abodes of wretchedness, if you do not repent. I have much that I want to say, but strength fails me, and death is about to close my lips.' His children being hardened in sin, attribute all his distress and agony of soul in their behalf, to an effeminate fear of death. Although they may tremble with cold horror, and an awful thrill of terror may agitate their souls, yet they very soon forget the awful scene. Thus a misspent life, and the neglect of parental duties in the appropriate season, constitutes death doubly terrific.

But contemplate for one moment the other side of the picture. The pious and faithful parent sees death approaching, but as his confidence in the divine promise is strong and unwavering, so death to him hath lost its sting, and the grave its gloom. His children are around his bed to catch the last words that drop from his lips, and to comply with his last request ; their prayers are lifted to God for some guardian angel to convoy his soul to the mansions of bliss and the bosom of his Saviour ; and the dying parent prospectively sees his place more than filled in the church and in the world. And if he should have an impenitent and disobedient child around his couch, an implicit confidence in the promise of his covenant-keeping God, and a consciousness that he has tried faithfully to do his duty, affords him a sweet composure of soul, and a heavenly peace as the soul leaves its clayey tabernacle ; or he can affectionately and feelingly give him his last warning and dying advice, and that with a clear and steady voice, feeling that his confidence in the divine Saviour is unshaken. While looking death in the face, and almost in the presence of the unseen God, and in paradise with the Saviour, he points him to that Saviour who was with him in life, and his great and only solace in death ; and while gasping in death breathes out a fervent prayer for his im-

penitent son, and sweetly sleeps in the embraces of the Saviour, prepared to meet that son before the judgment-seat. And now what other encouragement, or what stronger motive, do you need to induce you to be faithful, to command your children and your household after you? You have the solemn pledge of your covenant-keeping God, that your children shall inherit the richest blessing Heaven can bestow; and the blessing, rich and invaluable as it is, and ill-deserving as we are of it, is not confined to your children, any more than it was confined to Isaac, but descends to our children's children, even to a thousand generations. Even in your family there may be another part of the ancient promise to Abraham accomplished, which may be a very prominent part of the consummated church, redeemed by the blood of Christ from our lost and ruined world.

Besides, your love to your children, and a desire to see them polished stones in that glorious building, for the glory of the great Architect or Redeemer, should be an additional motive to fidelity. What is more desirable to the pious parent's heart than the prospect of meeting his dear children at the right hand of the Son of Man in glory, and to unite with them in anthems of praise to redeeming grace? You may be the divinely appointed means of bringing them home to eternal

glory. The parental fidelity of Abraham was the divinely appointed means for preparing the way for covenanted blessings to rest upon his posterity. He thus became the father of the faithful; and why may not you be the spiritual fathers of your posterity? What hinders you from giving a direct and powerful religious impulse that shall reach down to the final consummation of the church? As the parental fidelity of Abraham has reached down through many generations to you, so that you have been the favored recipients of covenanted blessings, so why may not your parental fidelity reach down to the end of the world? Is it not in this way that the church has been perpetuated? Shall its further and continued progress be arrested by your violation of the covenant and your parental neglect of the pious education of your children?

Again, reflect for one moment. What a perfect ecstatic joy must have thrilled the soul of Abraham when he met Isaac in the paradise of God! And how was that joy increased and elevated into a perfect and heavenly rapture as Jacob and the patriarchs, Moses, David, Elijah, and Elisha swelled the heavenly throng! How will his soul swell with gratitude and praise to his covenant-keeping God, as he sees the children of the promise entering the Mount Zion above!

And when the children of the promise of this age shall be seen collecting around the throne of God and the Lamb, and a perpetual succession of the elect from the four winds flocking into the beatific presence of the Saviour, how will all the souls of the redeemed be divinely enraptured! If like Abraham you exercise parental fidelity in the pious education of your children, you will experience a similar ecstasy of joy and delight, of gratitude and praise; a joy that will know no limits, and a sweet hosanna to God and the Lamb that will eternally thrill your soul with a love that is divine and heavenly, and with a happiness that is eternal and without alloy.

CHAPTER IV.

MISSIONARY SERMON.

“ And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth ; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south ; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”
—GENESIS, xxviii. 14.

THE supreme and grand object of the gospel is to gather together the elect from the four winds of heaven, and organize them systematically into a body, or church. And this church is to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the city set on a hill, and the leaven intended to reach to, and revolutionize, renew, and transform a wicked world into a glorious, and splendid ‘temple in the Lord, in whom also ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.’ All our associations, whether large or small, so far as they are in accordance with, and are managed and improved according to the divine word, are intended to bring back to God a lost, ruined and fallen world. In our families, in our ecclesiastical or-

ganizations, and in all our benevolent enterprises, we should have an eye single to the glory of God, and the glorious consummation of all the divine purposes of mercy. Family religion carried out in its legitimate results is the germ of every ecclesiastical organization and benevolent enterprise; and the best possible security, so far as human agency is concerned, for the perpetuity of our civil and religious liberty.

The infinite and eternal God, who is the head and author of this church, has placed great emphasis, and appended infinitely momentous results upon family religion; and hence he said of Abram: 'For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abram that which he hath spoken of him.' And what hath the Lord spoken of him? 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generation, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' The fidelity of Abram, as the father of his family, was the appointed medium through which all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Family religion, carried out in its legitimate consequences and divinely intended effects, is that life-giving, and spirit-moving, and

grand and sublime, though simple enterprise, which must convert the world. And no benevolent enterprise should contemplate or aim at any thing less than the conversion of the world. This Divinity contemplated in the family organization of Abram. I have recently pondered in my mind which benevolent enterprise of the age claims our first attention, and demands our chief patronage, and have at length made up my mind that a family missionary society, properly conducted, would very easily amalgamate all those benevolent objects into one grand central organization in such a way as must necessarily secure the entire accomplishment of the great whole.

I. THE EXTENT AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE DIVINE PROMISE AS MADE TO ABRAM, IN WHOSE FAMILY THE CHURCH WAS FIRST VISIBLY ORGANIZED, AND IN THE TEXT RENEWED, REPEATED AND CONFIRMED TO JACOB AND HIS SEED.

II. THE DIVINELY APPOINTED MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THIS PROMISE IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

I. The extent and universality of the Divine promise, as made to Abram, in whose family the church was first visibly organized, and in the text renewed, repeated, and confirmed to Jacob and his seed.

In the text it is said, 'Thy seed shall be as the

dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north and to the south ;' and if this does not include the whole earth, then certainly the latter part of the promise or covenant must fill up every remaining vacuum, 'for in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' And all the families of the earth will necessarily include all the nations of the earth as well as every individual. Who are left out of this enumeration ? Who can consistently regard himself, as not included in the promise ? Who is not at perfect liberty to place himself under the protection of this covenant ? But all the families of the earth have not been blessed, for great multitudes of the human race are now sitting in the region and shadow of death, and have never heard of a Saviour, nor participated in the blessings and consolations of the gospel ; then the promise has not been wholly accomplished. True, but it is in the course of being accomplished in the present rapid and universal distribution of the Bible, and the success that is attending missionary labors, and the divine patronage that the multiplied benevolent enterprises of the age experiences. The very spirit and substance of the promise is scattered all along through the Bible, and repeated and confirmed to God's people in different eras of the church ; and

they are a perpetuation of the covenant, and an evidence of the divine determination to accomplish all he hath promised. While the Jews, by their infidelity, threw themselves from under the protection of the covenant, yet they are assured, upon their repentance and return to God, of a return of the blessing in such a sense, that their latter end shall be better than their beginning. And not only so, but Christ has promised to him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And as Christ is the glorious and divine personage in whom, or through whom, all the families of the earth are to be blessed, and as in accordance with the divine promise, he, the expected seed and the predicted Shiloh has come, and is proclaimed a Saviour for all, in that he hath tasted death for every creature, so the way is pre-eminently prepared for the universal spread of the gospel. Every middle wall of partition is broken down, and every obstacle in the way of the entire accomplishment of the whole promise of God is entirely removed out of the way, and human agency is being brought to harmonize with the divine arrangements and plans, and the work of the evangelization of the world is going onward.

We are explicitly informed that the stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall become

a great mountain, and fill the whole earth, and there are a multitude of promises that speak the same language in substance and in spirit. It is said of the Messiah's kingdom, 'Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. In that day,—In what day? At the time when the patriarchal promise is completely accomplished, and the gospel is being published to the whole world.—'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses holiness to the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts.' Here is a confirmation of the doctrine of the text, and evidence that God had not forgotten his original promise, when the Jews, that is, the church, were in adversity, and were about to be restored from their Babylonish captivity. In fact, this restoration was an earnest of the final resuscitation of the remnant according to the election of grace, and the glorious consummation of all the divine purposes of mercy to our world.

Why are we informed, 'That the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever?' And why is it written, 'For thou wast

slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests?' Has the God of eternal truth made such blessed and soul-animating promises with no intention of fulfilling them? Hath God encouraged us to expect that the world will be converted, merely to tantalize us, and excite our curiosity, and put our minds upon a perpetual stretch to investigate his word? Hath God informed us that mankind will be redeemed by the blood of Jesus out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and that the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever? and are we building castles in the air, when we confidently pray and labor for the latter-day glory of the world, which kings and prophets desired so anxiously to see? And are all our strong desires, and fondly cherished expectations of the universal emancipation of a lost world from the cruel bondage of sin and Satan a perfect delusion? If the promise in the text, sanctioned by parallel promises scattered all through the Bible, and the already begun, and the continued fulfillment of that very promise from the time of its utterance to the present day, as developed in the history of the Jewish church to the coming of Christ; and from

that period, in the scattering of the Jews among all the nations of the earth, and in the rise, progress and history of the Christian church to the present day, be not evidence of the certainty of the final and complete fulfillment of the promise, then I can have no evidence that the sun will set to-night, or rise to-morrow, or that the world will not be drowned by a flood, the bow in the cloud notwithstanding.

II. The divinely appointed medium through which this promise is to be accomplished.

All, or certainly the most prominent and distinguished promises of God to man, seem to be connected either directly or indirectly with personal piety and family religion. The history of the world is nothing more nor less than a history of family religious education. If we discover anarchy, confusion, and unsubmission to the civil authority, it may easily be traced to some wicked Ham or Canaan; or if order, propriety and subjection to the powers that prevail, it may as easily be traced to some faithful Abram, or devoted Hannah, and their obedient children, Isaac and Samuel. Historical fact, and the very spirit of the divine promises, direct our attention to family religion, as the divinely appointed means to secure the salvation of a lost world.

In every family there is necessarily an educa-

tion society, in which all the children are instructed, and every subsequent act of their lives participates of the nature of the education they have received in a greater or less degree, and thus exhibit in their conduct the character of their instructors. Here there is the infant school, in which the mother principally and almost exclusively officiates. Her very nod, and the expression of her countenance, instantaneously suppresses the smile that sits upon the lips of the helpless little immortal, or her frown arrests in a moment its first mischievous act. Maternal approbation, expressed in the placidness of her countenance, encourages and cherishes the first buddings of the enmity of the carnal heart. Here are taught and learned the first lessons that form the future character of the man. Impressions made in this school upon the infantile mind are seldom if ever entirely obliterated. And, alas! how often are the first buddings of evil highly approbated, as exhibitions of the precocious cunning of the lisping and almost helpless infant! At this very critical juncture, how easy to repress the first risings of iniquity, but how seldom is it done! Here, more frequently than we imagine, the character for life is formed under the plastic tuition of maternal tenderness. Here are taught the first elements of Christianity, and here originates that

missionary spirit which regulates the whole subsequent life. Here S. J. Mills was taught that missionary spirit which has been felt on the arid plains of Africa, in India, and upon the isles of the sea. On the lap of his devoted mother, and in this blessed infant school, was he solemnly dedicated to the missionary work! Was not this a mighty moral engine, emphatically calculated to secure the entire accomplishment of the precious promise contained in the text?

How soon is the Sabbath-school and catechetical instruction necessarily introduced into the family arrangement! How early in life are children taught to sanctify or desecrate the holy Sabbath by the example and precept of their parents! With what delight do parents listen to the first warblings of their infant offspring! What pains do they take to induce the babe to speak, and enunciate the name of father or mother! How soon and how diligently do they catechise it, that they may ascertain what it can comprehend! How easy now to impress indelibly upon their infantile minds important and eternal truth! Here, too, parents are instructors in this domestic Sabbath-school, and every parent is necessarily a teacher. It is an office they must execute; their instructions will have an effect upon the whole domestic circle, and its influence, whether good

or bad, is not and cannot be confined to that individual family. It is felt in the whole community, in the conduct of the children, so that all learn the entire nature and character of the education they are receiving at home. Parents, then, are the instructors of their children, and it is utterly impossible to escape or evade the responsibility. A careless neglect to mould and form the minds of their children to habits of virtue, is teaching them impiety, for parental indifference gives a full rein to all the unhallowed principles and passions of the carnal and unrenewed heart. The free indulgence of children to grow up in habits of idleness, and inattention to the proper culture of their minds, is emphatically teaching them evil; for innocence and idleness are utter strangers. Idleness is the legitimate parent of vice. Besides, a determination to leave your children at perfect liberty to form a character independent of your example, according to the light of nature and reason, is a perfect impossibility in the very nature of mind. The parental example cannot but have an influence upon the mind of the child, who always necessarily looks up to his parent as the model of perfection. How can the infantile and youthful mind avoid being influenced by parental example, even where there is no special precept given for the regulation of their conduct! Sometimes a pa-

rent's wicked example does compel the child, when it is permitted to come within the influence of a virtuous atmosphere, to contemplate the precept and example of others, and in some cases the thrillingly alarming contrast does induce the child to avoid the example of its wicked parents. This ordinarily occurs when some disinterestedly pious individual assumes the dread responsibility of controlling and directing the education of that child; and then that child regards with dread and horror the example and precept of that wicked parent, and in its turn becomes extremely anxious to instruct its parent. Hence neglect on the part of parents is calculated to retard the progress of the gospel in the world, and prevent the conversion of the world. Fidelity on the part of parents will prepare the way for the accomplishment of the divine promises.

But another enterprise here forces itself upon our attention, that is indispensably necessary to the perfecting of family religion. The parent needs a directory that is infallible and superhuman, or he will be peculiarly prone to err in judgment. Here, then, we must introduce the Bible. In this he is taught how to instruct his children. His precepts and example must correspond. While he is expressly commanded, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy

heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart;' he is commanded to teach his children the same things: 'And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.' These directions, faithfully obeyed and followed up, would soon convert the world. And these are divine directions for the regulation of our family religion, and perfect obedience to these instructions will certainly constitute every family a Sabbath school, a Bible class, and a Bible society; and these, carried out in their legitimate results, will certainly insure the perfect and entire accomplishment of the promise in our text. Having then, according to the divine plan, enjoined upon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the whole Jewish church, in the family organization, to all intents and purposes, an infant-school, a Sabbath-school, a Bible class, a Bible society, these conjointly must open to the benevolent a field of operation as extensive as the world, and originate a desire to

do good on an infinitely more extended plan, especially when the length and breadth, and extent, and universality of the divine promise is contemplated, which made all this arrangement for instituting and conducting family religion. How can instruction, thus communicated in the family, be confined to that narrow circle? Can the contemplation of such sweet and precious promises, and the possibility of their perfect fulfillment agitating hearts warmed with divine love, and exciting souls earnestly to desire for the salvation of a lost world, as generated in such domestic Sabbath-schools, and education societies, be confined to that little circle? As easily may you confine the meridian rays of the sun, and close up the door of divine compassion, and smother the love of God to a guilty world. Has the eternal God, through the instrumentality of family religion, devised a plan for all the families of the earth to be blessed, and when that plan is brought into operation in one family, will he crush the germ in its very bud? He did not do it in the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for, through these families and that blessed seed, how extensively has the gospel already been spread! He did not do it in the mother of the family of Samuel J. Mills; and he has not done it in many families that could be mentioned in these latter days. What is it that

gives life and energy to all the benevolent enterprises of the present age! Remove all family religion from Christendom, and how speedily would every fountain of benevolence be dried up! How soon would every missionary station be abandoned! How soon would 'darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the people!' The missionaries who have no families, have felt the want of family religion to give them influence among the heathen; for while they have no families of their own, they are regarded with extreme jealousy and suspicion; and hence one of them has made the remark, 'A family circle is a sanctuary, which a missionary to such a people needs above every other external comfort. While it, in good degree, raises him above suspicion, it concentrates around the fireside a thousand refining and elevating influences, which can proceed from no other source.'—See *Missionary Herald* for March, 1846, page 99.

Infer. I. In view of this subject, as connected with the conversion of the world agreeably to the divine plan, an immense responsibility rests upon the head of every family. You are a prominent agent for the missionary society, whether foreign or domestic; you necessarily exert a commanding influence; you do much for or against the conversion of the world; the instructions you give

your family, by your precept and example, will be felt upon unborn generations. If one sinner destroys much good, then the wicked example and precept of one head of a family will do incalculable injury. You are placed in a very prominent and commanding station ; and God has placed you there to be a blessing to your family, and, through them, a blessing to unborn millions. Has the covenant blessing descended to you through an unbroken chain, through thousands of generations? Are you enjoying the sweet consolations of the Christian religion in your own soul? And do you feel it to be a privilege to have been born and educated in a gospel land, and to have lived under the very droppings of the sanctuary and the family altar? And are you not solemnly bound, by every possible means in your power, to perpetuate these rich covenant blessings to your family, and use every effort to transmit them to all the families of the earth? Can you be exonerated from blame, if you neglect to have a domestic Sabbath-school, and an education and missionary society in your own family? As your family is incorporated in that one perfect chain of families from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to that period when all the families of the earth are to be blessed, so your neglect of duty, which breaks one link in that chain, will be calculated to break

the chain, and arrest the perpetuity of the blessing, and entail the curse of God upon your posterity. I know very well that God has things so wisely arranged in his providential government, as to insure the full success and entire completion of his promise to bless all the families of the earth through the glorious Gospel of his dear Son; I know, too, that though, by your infidelity and neglect of covenantal duties, you make a mighty effort to break away from the conditions of the covenant, and thus arrest the perpetuation of the blessing, God will so overrule your wickedness that it will not retard the fulfilment of his promise. But are you willing to be deprived of your place in that covenant chain of family blessings? Are you willing to take the responsibility of making an effort to defeat the divine plans of benevolence? Are you willing to be the medium of entailing curses upon your posterity? Are you willing to stand in the way of the conversion of the world?

Infer. II. In view of this subject, we discover the simplicity of the divine plan for the conversion of the world—even so simple and plain, that every one can easily comprehend it, and as easily reduce it to practice. It is a plan in which all can perform a part. Parents and children, rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant, the states-

man and the peasant, the profound philosopher, and he that has a weak intellect, may do something to forward the glorious work of carrying salvation to all the families of the earth. A part of God's greatness consists in accomplishing great and stupendous enterprises through the instrumentality of things that are denominated weak and inefficient. Hence it is written: 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.' Hence the little family circle is to determine the destiny of the world! How high an estimate, then, must the eternal God set upon family religion! Family religion is the little internal machinery that moves all the stupendous and benevolent enterprises of the age, that are shaking the strongholds of the pagan and heathen world. Though the family be in the vale of poverty and obscurity, and have never been seen half a mile from home; and though they may be lost in the multiplicity of families more noted, with which they are surrounded; yet they produce an under-current that cannot be successfully resisted, and in the final consummation they will emerge from their deep obscurity, and bring countless and invaluable blessings in their train. With what little effort and self-denial may we all

be found workers together with God! His plan is brought down to the level of the very poorest, that the prayers of all and the interest of all may be concentrated to one point—the glory of God in the salvation of the world. How easy is it for every family to have a missionary box, and each individual to drop a cent or more every week into that box! Then something will be done systematically, and no family will feel it; and yet, when all these mites are collected together and cast into the treasury of the Lord, it will amount to a considerable sum—a sum that will cause us to feel a deep interest in the missionary operations of the age. If we feel a deep and lively interest in these missionary operations, we shall feel a disposition to pray more for the conversion of the world; and to the missionary this is emphatically desirable. We shall then, too, feel proportionably more desirous for the success and growth of vital religion in our own souls, and in that portion of the Lord's heritage where Providence hath cast our lot. This will kindle a little flame of divine love around each domestic hearth, that will exert a salutary and life-giving influence upon the whole community, and cause all to experience more intellectual enjoyment, and generate a genuine dignity of character and self-respect, that will put a new aspect upon everything, and greatly elevate

the morality and intelligence of the community. We shall then learn from our own experience that 'the liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' Benevolence exercised towards others will rebound in redoubled blessings upon our own souls. There is something peculiarly mysterious and wonderful in the divine plan of doing good, for it is always sure to benefit the giver; so that 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' As we cannot injure others without injuring ourselves, so we cannot do good to others without proportionably benefiting our own souls. This divine enterprise of family religion for the spread of the Gospel through the world, is wonderfully calculated to happify not only families, but the whole community. It gives every member of the family something to do, something to occupy the mind and elevate the standard of intelligence, which imposes upon each one a great degree of personal responsibility. It takes the mind away from the supreme contemplation of ourselves, and constrains us to meditate upon the situation and miseries of our fellow-men; and as we are divinely exhorted to 'remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in adversity;' so we very naturally and imperceptibly lose sight of

our diminutive self in our sympathetic benevolence for those who are so much worse off than we ourselves. This sympathetic benevolence having once found a lodgment in our bosoms, enlarges and expands the mind, breaks down the strong bonds of prejudice, dislodges envy from the soul, banishes and exterminates covetousness (which is idolatry) from the family, generates that charity which rejoices in the prosperity of others, and so liberalizes the mind that every narrow and contracted scheme is abandoned, and we are prepared to engage heartily in every good work. And when the minds of the whole family circle are so entirely saturated with benevolence as to do to others what they would that others should do to them, then the naked are clothed, the hungry are fed, and the poor and the destitute have the Gospel preached unto them; then do happiness and peace reign in that family, and heaven has begun in their souls, and the donor and the beneficiary rejoice together; and sometimes it is extremely difficult to determine which is the most grateful, the giver or the receiver.

Now, if every family in the whole community were completely, in all their parts, saturated with this divine benevolence; if prejudice, envy, superstition, bigotry, and covetousness were so obliterated from every mind in that whole community

as to fit and prepare them all to be workers together with God ; then should we see this divine enterprise, based upon the grand principle of the Abrahamic covenant, rapidly perfecting the divine promises, and blessing all the families of the earth.

When the Lord Jesus Christ gave his solemn and immensely responsible commission to his disciples, immediately previous to his ascension into heaven, saying, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,’ it was in perfect accordance with the original promise of salvation to all the families of the earth. Christ himself being the promised seed, and the expected Shiloh in whom all the promises centred, it was meet and proper that he should give a new impulse to the work. This was emphatically done by his mission, which afforded miraculous evidence that God remembered his covenant, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost ; and hence Peter alludes, very decidedly and significantly, to the original covenant, as if it were obligatory, and actually accomplishing, for he says : ‘The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ Nothing, in all these miraculous exhibitions of divinity, was in contrariety with this grand model of missionary

effort that is set before us in the text. Everything that Christ said and did was, in fact, carrying onward and forward the divine plan for the conversion of the world, and preparing the way for Christ to have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, and to see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. As every father is the divinely installed minister over his own household, and the shepherd of that little flock which he daily finds in the domestic circle, so he necessarily finds himself amalgamated and incorporated in the divine plan suggested by the text, and imperfectly developed in this sermon, and in the history of the church and the divine moral government of the world. In properly maintaining and managing our family religion, according to the principles of the Abrahamic covenant—‘For I know him, that he will command his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him’—we have in our possession the very germ of the church, the nucleus of every missionary enterprise, and the very *core* of every benevolent institution. If we have so much in our possession, then certainly all these means of grace are so under our control, that we can very easily give efficiency to all their

movements, or we may as easily retard their salutary operations. We cannot make a moral movement around our domestic hearth without touching some hidden nerve or chord that will pulsate through the whole church, and be felt, more or less sensibly, in every part of the Christian, heathen, and pagan world. Look at the sensation produced by the prayers, piety, and devotion of S. J. Mills' mother. Its thrills have not ceased to vibrate through the world, whether Jewish, Christian, pagan, or heathen, and cannot cease till the church is consummated in glory. The church that is in thine house, or the family missionary society, is a kind of spiritual magnetic telegraph, by which the magnetic fluid passes with the greatest imaginable rapidity through every part of the divine moral government.

Now, if every family throughout Christendom were a church, with an altar on which the morning and evening sacrifice was ever burning, and around every altar was organized a family missionary society, and every soul fired with a genuine missionary spirit, how long would those flames remain pent up in those domestic churches? How long before all these twinkling luminaries would commingle their flames into one grand fountain of light, that would irradiate every benighted part of our globe? And as every ray increases that

fountain of light, and proportionably magnifies its splendor and utility, and sends an additional thrill of joy among glorified and redeemed souls, so, who in this assembly would be willing to be found destitute of a missionary spirit? What head of a family does not wish to be enumerated among those twinkling luminaries that, conjoined, pour such a flood of light, of glory, and of happiness upon a lost world?



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